

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on my special order in recognition of the life of Betty Shabazz to be given today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF BETTY SHABAZZ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come forward this evening to lead a special order in recognition of the life of Betty Shabazz.

Betty Saunders was the adopted and only daughter of loving parents, who grew up in Detroit, MI. She died on June 24, 3 weeks after being burned over 80 percent of her body. Her grandson, Malcolm, has been convicted of the arson and has since been judged to have been mentally disturbed.

I come forward this evening to speak of a woman who in a very real sense was two women. Betty Shabazz was her own woman, and inescapably and memorably, Betty Shabazz was the widow of a great man, Malcolm X. The two identities are inevitably related. Each side, gracious and strong, fed the other side of this remarkable woman.

I want to begin by saying some words about Betty, and later on I want to say some words about Malcolm X, because many have no clear vision of who Malcolm became, and in honoring Betty, we inevitably honor this man who transformed himself.

I knew Betty well. On one level she was simply a friend, one of the girls. On the level where she is remembered best, she of course was the widow of Malcolm X. But at the level that I find most remarkable, Betty Shabazz was all Betty, not Malcolm, because Betty, like Malcolm, redefined herself from the wife of a great man who was tragically assassinated, to herself, a self-made woman.

There is, of course, Betty the mother. There is a kind of primacy that was attached to being Betty the mother. When you raise six girls, when your husband is struck down and assassinated before your very eyes, when you and four children are in the ballroom where that act occurs, you are inescapably, first and foremost, a mother. When you are pregnant with twins who are then later born, there is a very special primacy to being a mother.

Yes, she went on to get her doctorate and to become an associate professor at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, NY, and ultimately to become an adminis-

trator in that college. This is the kind of transformation aspect of her life that, in many ways, is shades of Malcolm.

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Betty met Malcolm in New York, having come there to study nursing. She described the courtship as an old-fashioned courtship. I wish we had more of those today. Malcolm loved children, and he particularly loved his children. I must say that during their what turned out to be a short marriage, Betty was pregnant most of the time.

Malcolm was assassinated on February 21st, 1965, with four of those six girls by her side. She threw herself onto the children when she heard the bullets, and then she ran to Malcolm, by which time he was already dead.

How do you go forward after something like that? Unlike the two other civil rights widows, with whom she became friends, Betty was left without any protection. Myrlie Evers, the extraordinary wife of Medgar Evers, who has since become chair of the board of the NAACP, was left with the protection of our largest and oldest and best-known civil rights organization, the NAACP. Coretta Scott King, when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated, was left with the protection of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and, as it turned out, of much of the Nation, for whom King was recognized as a very special martyr and a very great man. But as for Betty, it was members of the Nation of Islam who were ultimately convicted of the assassination of her husband. She was left with no organizational protection.

What did she do? She did what such women often do, only she did it in her way. She raised these girls, got more education, and went on and got a career. The country and the world did not hear much of Betty Shabazz during this period. I cannot imagine who could have heard much of Betty Shabazz, doing what she was doing during this period. She lived a very private life. She was particularly keen to protect these children, and, of course, she had to live and move forward.

I had a forum at the Black Caucus Weekend last year where I invited Betty Shabazz, my old friend, to be one of the speakers, because it spoke to issues about which she had been identified. And this very gracious and remarkable woman was anything but self-assured about coming to this forum and speaking at this forum with women whom she regarded as more practiced at such pursuits.

I remember that Betty said when she finally got herself so that she could see the movie Malcolm X that the young actress who portrayed her was far more self-assured than Betty felt she was during this period. There was a kind of inner assurance and inner conviction, an inner self-esteem that came out during the forum, and that was part of the very essence of Betty Shabazz.

Ultimately, in addition to her professional stature, Betty was to become a human rights advocate of very special stature.

I want to say something further about her husband, the man who transformed himself from a petty criminal to a major league thug to a black Muslim and finally to an orthodox Sunni Muslim who embraced universal brotherhood, because I think we ought to be clear who Malcolm became. There is lack of clarity on that in this country, because only then can we understand Betty Shabazz.

But before I go on, I see that I have been joined by my good colleague, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. JOHN LEWIS]. It is very fitting that JOHN should come forward first, for he and I worked together in the very same civil rights movement for which the civil rights martyrs became so well-known and admired in this country, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Medgar Evers.

I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. JOHN LEWIS].

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend and my colleague, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia [Ms. NORTON], for calling this special order tonight. I know some time ago the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia had planned to hold a special order, but because of the schedule of the House, we are doing it tonight.

So Mr. Speaker, I join my colleague in paying tribute to a noble spirit, Dr. Betty Shabazz. I felt a profound sense of loss when I learned of her death. Betty Shabazz stood tall as a wife, a mother, and a friend.

As a matter of fact, I knew Malcolm and got to know her husband fairly well. I first met him on the night of August 27th, 1963, 34 years ago, here in the city of Washington on the eve of the march on Washington. The last time I saw her husband alive was in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 1964, at the New Stanley Hotel.

Malcolm and Betty together represented something deep and good about the very best of America. Betty Shabazz stood tall as a wife, as a mother. She stood tall as a woman of courage, pride, and with a great sense of dignity.

As I said before, at the age of 28, Betty Shabazz suddenly lost her husband, Malcolm, to an assassin's bullet. With few resources, she began to raise her six daughters. With determination she pursued and achieved a doctorate degree in education. With a deep sense of compassion and an abiding faith, Betty Shabazz continued Malcolm's work.

On February 21, 1965, I say to the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia Ms. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, my friend and colleague of long standing, I remember very well, we were driving back from Macon, GA in south Georgia on the way to the city of Atlanta, and then on our way to Selma, when we